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HVL LESSON TITLE:

A BIG LOSS FOR G.I.'S

DEVELOPED BY: ERIN COGGINS

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GUIDING QUESTION:

How did WWII correspondent Ernie Pyle contribute to morale in the ranks and on the home-front?

OVERVIEW:

World War II veteran Ted Estridge fought in the Battle of Okinawa where he was wounded. The tragic news of war was covered by thousands of WWII correspondents, but Ernie Pyle, killed in Okinawa, seemed to be the American G.I.'s favorite storyteller.



SUBJECT(S):
Social Studies/English



WWII VETERAN(S):
Ted Estridge



DURATION:
60 minutes

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“The real heroes are the ones that gave their life for the country. ”

WWII Veteran Ted Estridge

OVERVIEW:

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OBJECTIVES:

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to

- Analyze a map for information.
- Analyze written primary sources.
- Write a narrative in response to information learned.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Indiana native, Ernie Pyle, became known for his stories about ordinary American soldiers during WWII. Both G.I.'s and those on the homefront helped to make Pyle an American folk hero.

Pyle, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his article *Captain Waskow*, covered the war in Africa, Italy, England, France, and the Pacific Islands.

He was shot and killed by a Japanese sniper on Ie Shima Island April 18, 1945. The island is located a few miles off the coast of Okinawa, Japan.

STANDARDS:

CCRI: 3 Anchor Standards

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

AL: 11: 9 Social Studies

Describe the significance of major battles, events, and consequences of World War II campaigns, including Okinawa.

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MATERIALS & DOCUMENTS

Okinawa Battle Map (Doc A)

[Ted Estridge Video](#)

Understanding Okinawa (Doc B)

[Ernie Pyle Video Clip](#)

Pyle Analysis Handout (Doc C)

Pyle Article Handout (Doc D)

Military Responds to Pyle's Death (Doc E)

Tribute Assignment (Doc F)

PROCEDURES

ACTIVITY 01

- Distribute the copies of the Okinawa Battle Map (Doc A) or project the map ([LINK](#)). Point out the following: the landing date, the fierce Japanese resistance, the note on a kamikaze, Ie Shima island, date of the end of the campaign.
- Ask students "What words would you use to describe the Battle of Okinawa? Discuss.

ACTIVITY 02

- Distribute the Understanding Okinawa Handout (Doc B). Direct students to the first part on Ted Estridge. Tell students to complete this portion as they watch a video on Ted Estridge.
- Show [Ted Estridge Video](#).
- After the video, ask students if the words they used to describe the Battle of Okinawa still ring true after hearing Estridge talk about his experience at Okinawa.

ACTIVITY 03

- Instruct students the media during WWII shared the tragic battle news, but correspondent Ernie Pyle took a different approach. Show the Ernie Pyle Video Clip.
- After the clip, direct students to the Pyle Analysis Handout (Doc C). Answer the questions in Part One together.
- For Part Two, teachers can partner students or allow them to work individually. They will read the excerpts from new articles on Doc. D and answer the questions. Discuss.
- Instruct students to the Military Responds to Pyle's Death (Doc E). Students will complete Part Three of Doc C.
- If time allows, students will take on the view of an American G.I. and write a

METHODS FOR EXTENSION

- Extend this lesson by having students read more of Pyle's Articles and write a news account of a WWII battle or campaign in Pyle's style. NOTE: [LINK TO PYLE'S ARTICLES](#)

DOC A



A BIG LOSS FOR G.I.'S

UNDERSTANDING OKINAWA

DOC B



Part One: The Experience of Ted Estridge

1. What happened to Mr. Estridge in battle? His buddy?
2. How does Mr. Estridge describe the area of embarkment?
3. How does Mr. Estridge describe his journey to the hospital?
4. What does Mr. Estridge say about Tojo and the Japanese people?
5. What does Mr. Estridge say about men who have been in combat?
6. What words would you use to describe the Battle of Okinawa after hearing Mr. Estridge's experience?

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PYLE ANALYSIS HANDOUT



Part One: Ernie Pyle Video Response

1. How does the video describe Pyle's writing style?
2. What did Pyle call the ordinary soldiers of the infantry?
3. What did Pyle write that infantry soldiers should get?
4. What did the Ernie Pyle Bill state?
5. What was Pyle's most famous column?
6. Where was Pyle killed?
7. After watching the video, why do feel Pyle was beloved by the American G.I.?

Part Two: Digging and Grouching Analysis

1. What are the soldiers doing?
2. How do you think they feel about Pyle joining them in the work?
3. In your opinion, what types of things does Pyle include in the article that would endure him to the American G.I.? To those at home?
4. Write what you believe to be Pyle's best story in this article. Why did you choose it?

Part Three: Pyle's Death

1. List three words/phrases used to describe the impact Pyle had on these men.
2. Gen. Mark Clark writes that Pyle "helped our soldiers to victory." What did he mean by this statement?
3. Choose three words that you would have engraved on a Pyle Memorial in Okinawa.

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ERNIE PYLE ARTICLE



DIGGING AND GROUSING

<https://erniepile.iu.edu/wartime-columns/digging-and-grouching.html>

ON THE NORTH AFRICAN DESERT, March 23, 1943 – When our Sahara salvage expedition finally found the wrecked airplanes far out on the endless desert, the mechanics went to work taking off usable parts, and four others of us appointed ourselves the official ditchdiggers of the day.

We were all afraid of being strafed if the Germans came over and saw men working around the planes, and we wanted a nice ditch handy for diving into. The way to have a nice ditch is to dig one. We wasted no time.

Would that all slit trenches could be dug in soil like that. The sand was soft and moist; just the kind children like to play in. The four of us dug a winding ditch forty feet long and three feet deep in about an hour and a half.

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The day got hot, and we took off our shirts. One sweating soldier said: "Five years ago you couldn't a got me to dig a ditch for five dollars an hour. Now look at me.

"You can't stop me digging ditches. I don't even want pay for it; I just dig for love. And I sure do hope this digging today is all wasted effort; I never wanted to do useless work so bad in my life.

"Any time I get fifty feet from my home ditch you'll find me digging a new ditch, and brother I ain't joking. I love to dig ditches."

Digging out here in the soft desert sand was paradise compared with the claylike digging back at our base. The ditch went forward like a prairie fire. We measured it with our eyes to see if it would hold everybody.

"Throw up some more right here," one of the boys said, indicating a low spot in the bank on either side. "Do you think we've got it deep enough?"

"It don't have to be so deep," another one said. "A bullet won't go through more than three inches of sand. Sand is the best thing there is for stopping bullets."

A growth of sagebrush hung over the ditch on one side. "Let's leave it right there," one of the boys said. "It's good for the imagination. Makes you think you're covered up even when you ain't."

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ERNIE PYLE ARTICLE

DOC D



While we were digging, one of the boys brought up for the thousandth time the question of that letter in Time magazine. What letter, you ask? Why, it's a letter you probably don't remember, but it has become famous around these parts.

It was in the November 23 [1942] issue, which eventually found its way over here. Somebody read it, spoke to a few friends, and pretty soon thousands of men were commenting on this letter in terms which the fire department won't permit me to set to paper.

To get to the point, it was written by a soldier, and it said: "The greatest Christmas present that can be given to us this year is not smoking jackets, ties, pipes or games. If people will only take the money and buy war bonds . . . they will be helping themselves and helping us to be home next Christmas. Being home next Christmas is something which would be appreciated by all of us boys in service!"

The letter was all right with the soldiers over here until they got down to the address of the writer and discovered he was still in camp in the States. For a soldier back home to open his trap about anything concerning the war is like waving a red flag at the troops over here. They say they can do whatever talking is necessary.

"Them poor dogfaces back home," said one of the ditch-diggers with fine soldier sarcasm, "they've really got it rugged. Nothing to eat but them old greasy pork chops and them three-inch steaks all the time. I wouldn't be surprised if they don't have to eat eggs several times a week."

"And they're so lonely," said another. "No entertainment except to rattle them old dames around the dance floor. The USO closes at ten o'clock and the nightclubs at three. It's mighty tough on them. No wonder they want to get home."

"And they probably don't get no sleep," said another, "sleeping on them old cots with springs and everything, and scalding themselves in hot baths all the time."

"And nothing to drink but that nasty old ten-cent beer and that awful Canadian Club whiskey," chimed in another philosopher with a shovel.

"And when they put a nickel in the box nothing comes out but Glenn Miller and Artie Shaw and such trash as that. My heart just bleeds for them poor guys."

"And did you see where he was?" asked another. "At the Albuquerque Air Base. And he wants to be home by next Christmas. Hell, if I could just see the Albuquerque Air Base again I'd think I was in heaven."

That's the way it goes. The boys feel a soldier isn't qualified to comment unless he's on the wrong side of the ocean. They're gay and full of their own wit when they get started that way, but just the same they mean it. It's a new form of the age-old soldier pastime of grouching. It helps take your mind off things.

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MILITARY RESPONSES TO PYLE'S DEATH

DOC E



Truman Pays Homage

U.S. Civil and Military Leaders Mourn 'Foxhole Correspondent'

WASHINGTON, April 18 (AP)--Ernie Pyle's death was announced by Navy Secretary James V. Forrestal, and President Truman issued a statement of condolence.

"The nation is quickly saddened again, by the death of Ernie Pyle," Mr. Truman said.

"No man in this war has so well told the story of the American fighting man as American fighting men wanted it told. He deserves the gratitude of all his countrymen."

Mr. Forrestal's statement said:

"With deep regret, the Navy announces the death on Ie Shima (Island) of Ernie Pyle, whose reporting of this war endeared him to the men of the armed forces throughout the world and to their families at home.

"He was killed instantly by Japanese machine-gun fire while standing beside the regimental commanding officer of Headquarters Troop, Seventy-seventh Division, United States Army. At the time of his death he was with the foot soldiers, the men for whom he had the greatest admiration.

"Mr. Pyle will live in the hearts of all service men who revered him as a comrade and spokesman. More than anyone else, he helped America to understand the heroism and sacrifices of her fighting men. For that achievement, the nation owes him its unending gratitude."

President Praises Service

In his tribute to the 44-year-old reporter for Scripps-Howard newspapers, who covered the war in Europe before going to the Pacific early this year, President Truman said:

"More than any other man, he became the spokesman of the ordinary American in arms doing so many extraordinary things. It was his genius that the mass and power of our military and naval forces never obscured the men who made them.

"He wrote about a people in arms as people still, but a people moving in a determination which did not need pretensions as a part of power.

"Nobody knows how many individuals in our forces and at home he helped with his writings. But all Americans understand now how wisely, how warm heartedly, how honestly he served his country and his profession. He deserves the gratitude of all his countrymen."

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MILITARY RESPONSES TO PYLE'S DEATH

DOC E



Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson said today that soldiers have “lost a champion” in the death of Mr. Pyle.

“The understanding of Americans in battle which ran through all of Ernie Pyle’s dispatches was drawn from hours spent with them under fire, sharing dangers they endure,” Mr. Stimson said.

Marshall Expresses Sorrow

Gen. George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff said: Ernie Pyle belonged to the millions of soldiers he had made his friends. His dispatches reached down into the ranks to draw out the stories of individual soldiers. He did not glorify war, but he did glorify the nobility, the simplicity and heroism of the American fighting man. The Army deeply mourns his death.”

Eisenhower Pays Tribute

Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower paid tribute to Ernie Pyle Wednesday night, saying: “The GI’s in Europe--and that means all of us here--have lost one of our best and most understanding friends,” a Blue network correspondent, Herbert Clark, reported in a broadcast from Paris, according to The Associated Press.

General Clark Salutes Writer

FIFTEENTH ARMY GROUP HEADQUARTERS, Italy, April 18 (UP)--General Mark W. Clark paid tribute today to Ernie Pyle in the following message:

“A great soldier correspondent is dead, perhaps the greatest of this war. I refer to Ernie Pyle, who marched with my troops through Italy, took their part and championed their cause both here and at home.

“His reporting was always constructive. He was “Ernie” to privates and generals alike. He spoke the GI’s language and made it a part of the everlasting lore of our country. He was a humble man and in his humility lay his greatness.

“He will be missed by all of us fighting with the Fifteenth Army Group. There could have been only one Ernie Pyle. May God bless his memory. He helped our soldiers to victory.”

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TRIBUTE ASSIGNMENT

DOC F



DIRECTIONS: You are an American G.I. and have met Ernie Pyle along the way. You have just gotten word that he was killed in Okinawa. Using the space below, write a one-paragraph tribute to Pyle.